

Regional Freedom of Information Officer
U.S. EPA, Region 6
1445 Ross Avenue (6MD-OE)
Dallas, TX 75202-2733
(214) 665-7202

September 19, 2017

Re: Freedom of Information Act Request Seeking All Records Related to EPA's Benzene Air Sampling and Test Samples of Air Surrounding Valero Energy Refinery in Houston, Texas.

Dear agency FOIA officer:

On September 14, 2017, a joint *ProPublica-Texas Tribune* publication noted that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) took air samples around a Valero Energy refinery, after Hurricane Harvey came through and residents complained of rotten stench. The EPA did not release any specifics to the public, but said "concentrations of several toxic chemicals, including the carcinogen benzene, met Texas health guidelines."¹

Thus, pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. § 552), I hereby request all records related to EPA's benzene air sampling conducted in the atmosphere surrounding the Valero Energy refinery following Hurricane Harvey. I also request a copy of the benzene air sample test results. I would like these records in a searchable and analyzable electronic PDF format, *if that is feasible*.

I am requesting these records as a representative of Food & Water Watch (FWW), a national, non-profit, public interest, advocacy organization that champions for healthy food and clean water for all. I request a waiver of any fees because my interest in the records is not primarily commercial, and disclosure of the information will contribute significantly to public's understanding of EPA's role in examining the air quality surrounding the Valero Energy refinery, after Hurricane Harvey wreaked havoc in Houston, Texas.

FWW has the capability to analyze the requested records and to distribute its analysis to the general public. The organization regularly published blogs covering various issues about matters that impact the public interest. FWW also regularly publishes fact sheets, issue briefs, and reports, which it distributes widely. I do not intend to use or forward the requested records, or the information contained in them, for commercial purposes. If you deny any part of or this entire request, please provide an explanation, including legal authority; specifying the specific exemption you feel justifies the refusal to release the

¹ Collier, Kiah et al. "EPA won't release benzene levels collected post-Harvey; private tests show elevated levels." *Texas Tribune*. September 14, 2017. <https://www.texastribune.org/2017/09/14/epa-wont-release-benzene-levels-collected-after-harvey-private-monitor/>

information. Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter. Please contact me by phone (202-683-2481) or email (agrass@fwwatch.org) if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'AKG', followed by a horizontal flourish.

Alison K. Grass
Senior Researcher
Water Program
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Washington, DC 20036